

REVOLUTION

socialist youth movement

ISSUE 86

WIPE THAT SMILE OFF BROWN'S FACE!



STRIKE TO WIN!

also inside

• BOLIVIA: CIVIL WAR OR REVOLUTION? • WHAT'S WRONG WITH FEMINISM? • BURMA CRISIS • CATCH22 • AND MORE...

a word from the editor

★ BY JO ★ EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ★ LONDON

Burma has burst into the news this week as thousands braved heavy repression to call for an end to the country's military junta. In Britain Brown praised the people of Burma for "exercising with great bravery their right to peaceful protest". He accused the government of oppression and pressed for international action to be taken against it by the EU, America and the UN. Brown's concern about the democratic rights of the Burmese people is hard to swallow given his New Labour government's role as co-architect of the "War on Terror". After all this is a project that has brought misery, death and destruction to the Middle East. Not to mention the attacks on civil liberties in Britain that have taken place under the guise of anti-ter-

ror legislation. The response in the imperialist heartlands to the protests in Burma could not be more different to their response to other anti-government protests in the semi-colonial world. In Burma they have suddenly discovered their democratic credentials, while in so many other countries these are secondary to the more pressing concerns of these powers to uphold their political and economic interests. For example, the attacks on the lawyers protests in Pakistan by pro-government militia forces, despite an almost identical number of casualties, were not met with the same sympathy. Why? Because the military regime in Pakistan plays a key role in the war on terror as an ally in the region to the UK and US.

Brown, NATO and the UN may pick and choose what progressive movements to condone and condemn but we communists don't. We support all efforts by the international workers and poor to fight for democracy. At the same time simply supporting these struggles is not enough. The fight for real liberation must connect the struggle for democratic reforms, with the need to overthrow the whole capitalist system.

Is it the end of the road for the Respect coalition?

★ BY LUKE ★ LONDON ★

In the media Respect is often portrayed as simply the Galloway party, but the truth is altogether more complicated than that. It was developed as an alliance between anti-war Muslims and the far left Socialist Workers Party (SWP) with Galloway acting as the charismatic figurehead to unite these two forces. The SWP were the driving force behind its launch and provided the baulk of the activists that delivered the successful campaigns. Now these two wings are at open war with one another. George Galloway has condemned the organisational stranglehold the SWP keep on the national centre. Meanwhile the SWP has attacked Galloway and his supporters for "going over to communalism".

Since its formation in 2004 the Respect coalition has enjoyed a high public profile and limited electoral success in some areas. The biggest of these was, of course, the election of George Galloway as the MP for Bethnal Green and Bow in 2005 in a fierce contest with the Blairite Ona King. There have also been other successes, such as winning a number of seats on Tower Hamlets council. Galloway has developed a very high media profile. This has ranged from the good - an awesome performance when interrogated by the US senate. Right through to the downright ugly - a disastrous appearance on Big Brother where he pretended to be a cat in one of the shows humiliating games.

The roots of the current crisis in Respect are the class contradictions that were built into the project from the outset. The SWP formed the Respect party with Galloway on the basis of a cynical and unprincipled calculation. They hoped that by winning the support of Muslim "community leaders" in constituencies where Muslims are a high proportion of voters, they would get good electoral results. This was unprincipled as winning their support meant dropping key elements of the socialist programme, such as support for gay rights, secular education, not to mention the

more fundamental question of socialism, revolution and the working class.

The SWP were willing to make these concessions as they saw Respect as a short cut to electoral success - avoiding the trickier questions of winning workers on the hard arguments like revolution and socialism. Like all get-rich-quick-schemes the SWP did not get a return on their investment. At the very least the membership of the SWP has stagnated if not outright declined. Moreover, they missed the opportunity to win radicalised Muslims to the need for working class politics and struggle. At the high point of the anti-war movement, when parliament voted for the war despite the mass movement opposing it, there was a huge opportunity to win people to the idea that parliamentary democracy was a sham and a farce. The formation of Respect, which made very different, populist, arguments made this much harder.

It is totally hypocritical for the SWP to turn round now and accuse Galloway and his supporters of "going over to communalism" because this is just the policy the SWP has pursued since the foundation of Respect, tailing their politics to the Muslim businessman who could win the votes, rather than fighting to win working class Muslims to revolutionary ideas. They both in practice shared a communalist view of the Muslim community which didn't see it as divided on class lines like any other religious or ethnic community.

What made the Respect Coalition even worse was that it was a diversion from the urgent task of campaigning for a new working class party. The crisis in Respect today should be seen as an opportunity to



get a campaign for a new workers party off the ground. Brown is continuing the policies of the Blair government, attacking public sector workers and the power of the trade unions in the Labour Party. After the abysmal failure of the left to put up a challenge to Brown in the party elections, the need for a new party is obvious to many. What is lacking is the leadership in the working class movement to take the struggle forward. In any new campaign for a working class party, it's vital that revolutionary socialists argue clearly and openly for our ideas. We can unite with reformists to build a new party, while making clear that we believe it needs a revolutionary socialist programme if it is not to repeat the failures of the Labour party throughout the 20th century.

AFGHANISTAN

★ BY ROSA ★ HUDDERSFIELD ★

It is a well-known fact that Afghanistan is a country in turmoil and that the 'liberation' of 2001 has thrown the country into economic and political disaster. One of the increasingly popular ways of earning money is through cash crops, in particular, opium. Heroin is fast becoming the country's biggest export, Afghanistan now accounts for more than 93% of the world's opiates. The recent surge in opium growth has led to violent clashes between the desperate growers and Anti-drug plans similar to Plan Colombia, run by NATO troops. Internal conflict in Afghanistan is not confined to the drugs trade. With the much-publicised Taliban resistance reaching it's strongest point in the six years since troops first moved in. The Taliban resistance shows no sign of slowing and the occupation no sign of ending and this begs the question: *Is Afghanistan any better off now then it was when the Taliban regime was in place?*

The people of Afghanistan are at constant risk of attack and receive little if any aid. It's not just the occupation forces that are a threat to ordinary people but also disease and starvation. Thousands have been internally displaced, especially in the south. The Taliban regime is infamous for being repres-

sive to women, but Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission documented over 1,500 cases of atrocities against women last year. 200 of them were married off forcibly, 98 of them set themselves on fire, and over 100 of them tried to take their own lives by consuming poison. Six years after the departure of the repressive Taliban this is the reality of women in Afghanistan. They now formally have a say and a position under the country's constitution, but the reality is far from equality or freedom. Life under imperialist occupation always erodes the rights of women and Afghanistan is no exception. Despite the rhetoric of the US and UK about women's liberation upon the invasion, their actual goal is the securing of US interests in the region – not the interests of the Afghan people.

The people of Afghanistan are suffering more than ever as their country transforms into a battleground. The Taliban have launched a new attack on the UK and US troops deployed in areas such as Jalalebad and Kabul. Until the occupying forces are kicked out of Afghanistan the bloodshed will continue. In 2006 more than 3,000 Afghans died in the violence and the numbers increase every day. In September 2005 international aid

have not seen that money.

The Taliban leadership does not represent the character and politics of the whole resistance movement. The mass of people of Afghanistan are discontent with the new regime imperialism is imposing on them. Afghanistan shows that imperialism is never progressive and acts as a force that can keep entire nations impoverished and oppressed. What Afghanistan also shows is that after imperialist occupation, the situation does not just improve with time. Instead the imperialists use opposition to their rule to justify more troops, stricter control and the further restriction of people's freedoms.

The media may talk of our 'brave' soldiers being murdered by those willing to blow themselves up for their cause but if you look a little further than the government's propaganda, then you'll see the true suffering felt by those "liberated" people of Afghanistan. Don't listen to Brown's lies. Things are not better for Afghans and they are quickly deteriorating. The only hope for Afghanistan is to remove the imperialist powers, and then there will be hope of freedom. Victory to the resistance and victory to the people of Afghanistan.

British troops leave Basra

★ BY MARK ★ LEEDS ★

After spending months holed up in Saddam's palace in the centre of the city, subject to constant mortar and rocket barrage, the troops were only able to make their retreat because radical Shia cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr, leader of the Mehdi army announced a ceasefire, giving the troops room to withdraw and allowing them to leave Basra without having to fight their way out as many army generals had feared would happen.

So what have they achieved in their time in Basra? Little that is worth the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives that the invasion has cost. The British government claimed they are handing over Basra to the Iraqi Authorities. But who are the Iraqi authorities? The government is riddled with different Shia factions, and the police are infiltrated by every militia group under the sun. A militia commander was quoted as saying "80% of assassinations in 2006 were committed by individuals wearing police uniforms, carrying police guns and using police cars." There is little danger of sectarian violence erupting in Basra now the troops have left, as most of the Sunni minority population have already been driven out under the noses of the occupiers. All that is left is for the different Shia factions in the government to fight over what remains of local resources after four years of occupation and war.

So where are the troops going? They have been pulled back to Basra Airbase from where they can act as a rapid response force to back up the local government if it is needed. So the occupation will still be there in force, just out of sight until it is needed. However this force is being decreased from 5,000 to 2,000 in the coming months. The troops they remove from Iraq won't be taken out of action though. They will simply use the flexibility this gives them to send thousands more troops to Afghanistan which is seen as a winnable war, one which the troops and some of the British population still regard as a fight worth having. The imperialists are determined to have a victory in Afghanistan that is strategically very important in order to transfer oil and gas from the Middle East to Europe and America. Furthermore, following the British withdrawal from Basra, loss of control of Afghanistan would mean the total unravelling of the imperialist project and influence in the region. However, despite the fact the occupation has been ongoing for 6 years, the government has been completely unable to rule outside Kabul and has witnessed a massive resurgence of support for the Taliban, driven largely by widespread hatred for the brutality of the occupation.

There is also a growing threat of war with Iran. With the US and Britain losing control in Iraq they are terrified

that a pro-Iranian Shia regime may take power in Iraq which could use the combined oil wealth of those countries against the economies of the imperialists. New French president Nicholas Sarkozy has pledged his support for a conflict with Iran, hoping to correct the mistakes of his predecessors "anti-war" stance.

Also with Pakistan still in turmoil following the mass movement against the dictatorship of General Musharraf, reports of US bombing attacks in Northern Pakistan and US election candidate Barack Obama declaring that he would be willing to launch an attack without the government of Pakistan's permission the possibility of an incursion there to destabilise the country if an anti-US regime takes power is likely.

All this points in one direction; more war, more bloodshed and more profits for capitalism paid for with the blood of the working-class unless the war is stopped and the occupiers are driven out of the Middle East.

- Troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Hands off Iran!
- For strikes, walkouts and occupations to stop the war machine functioning! Victory to the resistance!
- Join the national demonstration against the war on October 8th

★ ONE WORLD ★ ONE BATTLE ★

REVOLUTION 3

pledges to the country had risen to more than \$10.5bn (£5.9bn), but corruption has worsened and the working class and poor

...A RISKY BUSINESS...

★ BY A GILDS WORKER ★ LIVERPOOL

For many young people today the world of work is a precarious one, where secure contracts and wages above the minimum are hard to come by and employment agencies are the only reliable source of labour. Having worked through agencies since sixteen I was more than aware of these downsides when I signed up with Gilds Hospitality and Catering at the beginning of the year, what I was not prepared for was the lax attitude that the firms they contract to took towards health and safety.

At the beginning of August I was sent to work at Huddersfield's Galpharm stadium where Gilds have a contract to supply workers for the various kiosks selling food and alcohol. Whilst it's usual practice to have at least two workers in each of these kiosks, I found myself posted on my own in a booth in the area of the stand designated for disabled fans. On arriving at work I found the kiosk in a bad state, clearly not having been cleaned or stocked up before the match and more worryingly the heavy door on the catering fridge appeared to only be held in place by its seal with no attached hinge fittings.

Having already been told that I wouldn't get many customers in this area of the ground I thought it better to leave the door off than to risk injury, finding that the fridge kept stuff adequately cool without the door. However, shortly after the beginning of my shift a supervisor came by to check on me and put the door back in place despite the obvious risk and told me "you need to leave the door like that, you'll just have to be careful with it". Whilst I was annoyed at this, the flow of customers at the time was slow enough for me to do this and keep safe. However, a rush of customers at half time meant that I was unable to do my job and give the extra consideration to the broken door, and whilst trying to get a number of drinks out of the fridge the door fell heavily on me leaving me with a deep gash across my forehead. Under normal circumstances I would have had another member of staff to go and get some help, as I was on my own I had to wait and bleed until a steward came by, as leaving the kiosk with an uncashed till is a sackable offence.

Having notified a supervisor I was taken and treated by St. Johns ambulance, who rightly advised me that I needed to find where the accident book was held and register the incident. Already angered by what had happened I was further shocked by how hard such a standard item was to track down, and by the number of Galpharm Stadium staff who advised me that I shouldn't bother recording the incident: clearly I was working in an environment where holding management to account on such issues was at best ignored and at worst discouraged. Not only were the managers at the stadium unconcerned, but it was over a week until I received a phone call from Gilds to check that I was ok.

What I hope to have shown by reporting on my experience is that no matter how much employers and agencies may stress health and safety procedure, when it comes to the crunch they will always disregard regulation when it comes to either avoiding blame, or getting more work out of you. This given there are several points which you must remember when starting a new job or being contracted to a new employer. Firstly, ensure that you know where the accident book is when you begin work and if you are injured in ANY way make sure that you record the incident in full detail as soon as possible afterwards. Secondly, if you are sent to work on your own then make sure that you are easily able to contact other people if you are hurt, whether that be working in close proximity to other staff, or being provided with a radio. Finally when working with any sort of machinery or potentially dangerous equipment, check it before beginning and if you believe it to be faulty or dangerous then inform your supervisor that you will not begin work until it has been made safe.



TUBE VICTORY!

★ BY JOSH ★ LONDON ★

In August, Metronet, the London underground maintenance giant went into administration. This meant a massive risk to the jobs and pensions of Metronet employees. RMT members voted by 1,123 to 20 to take strike action in September against the job and pension losses which would occur if Metronet went bust. Strike action aimed at insuring the rights of all Metronet workers. The union represents 2,000 maintenance workers in London. The failed private contractor was threatening to 'transfer' 250 workers to one of its investors, Bombardier Inc. for a new train-fleet contract. Not necessarily insuring the same pension and employment contracts.

At the beginning of September the first 72 hour walk out went ahead, causing, what the bourgeoisie media rightly called 'chaos' on London's streets. Six out of twelve tube lines were down (although this meant that six out of twelve were up and running of course) and many people struggled to get into work.

Whilst workers took strike action to preserve their employment rights the press seemed far more concerned with commuter's rights. Sure, there were other workers using the trains who will have had their journeys disrupted but this only goes to prove the importance of solidarity amongst the working class. Frequently the media referred to Bob Crow, the general secretary of RMT, as an old 'dinosaur', accusing him of manipulating his members into an all out strike.

Most of this press failed to recognise that the strike was an example of democracy, with 51% of RMT members turning out to vote (more than most local by-elections.) There was also some focus on the fact that Unite and TSSA, two other unions that represent maintenance workers, were not calling for strike action. Treated as though they were acting responsibly the fact that the RMT could secure their workers their jobs was not even an issue. When the second-

round of strikes was called off, the media (especially the free London papers) heralded it as a victory against the 'greedy' tube workers and their monstrous leader. In actual fact the strikes were called off because 'dinosaur' Crow and fellow RMT reps sat through eight hours of talks with Metronet and insured their workers contracts and pensions.

Unsurprisingly Prime Minister Gordon Brown did not offer the striking workers any support (it was whilst he was Chancellor of the Exchequer that privatisation of tube maintenance was pushed through) and urged them to get back to work. On top of this, so-called 'Red' Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, condemned the strike action even though it was barely a few years since he promised that he would help fight them on Labour Government privatisation. The main point that the politicians, media and countless Facebook groups ('Bob Crow is a W*cker' for example) failed to pick up on is that this strike was not simply about this issue. RMT are fighting the mass privatisation of transport in London and across the country. Metronet going into administration proves that with something as valuable as transport, especially in the capital, the public cannot trust a private firm.



FOR AN ALL OUT STRIKE IN THE POST!

★ BY MARK ★ LEEDS ★

The CWU are gearing up for another round of strikes in the battle with Royal Mail over privatisation of the postal service and Brown's public sector pay freeze. Following a month of negotiations Royal Mail has thrown down the gauntlet; not only are they not withdrawing any of their previous demands they are adding others like flexible working with no set start or finish time, forced overtime, no payment for masses of junk mail and retirement at 65 on even worse pension terms.

This is a slap in the face for the CWU and will spell the end of the union if it is not resisted forcefully. It has also revealed the weakness of the CWU bureaucracy's strategy. They called off all the strikes in favour of negotiations with Royal Mail. These negotiations were only offered because a series of wildcat strikes by 6,000 workers in Scotland and the north of England had crippled Royal Mail and threatened to spread to the rest of the country. Calling off the strikes meant the CWU had nothing to bargain with and Royal Mail treated them accordingly, offering them a rotten deal which they could never accept. This has forced them to call more strikes but after a month without any strike action the momentum built up has been lost and Royal Mail has been able to clear the backlog of mail (over 2 million items) which was held up by the strike.

The leadership of the CWU have done the obvious and called two 48 hour strikes for the 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th of October. It is imperative now that all youth, workers and students support these strikes and make sure they are as solid as the previous ones that brought 95% of the workforce out on strike. The CWU leadership should organise workplace and branch meetings in every town and city and send the Union exec members to all the meetings to explain why they need to strike again and what is at stake. This way workers can hear what needs to be done and they can demand the necessary action from the leadership to defeat Royal Mail.

This time however the strikes must not be left in the hands of the bureaucracy. Postal worker militants must organise a national conference, calling on all

workplaces and branches to send delegates so they can debate and discuss the way to organise and coordinate the action independently of the trade union bureaucracy. The entire public sector is under attack and many public sector pay campaigns have been organised.

Postal workers should attend these meetings and argue for solidarity action from all other public sector workers facing similar attacks on wages and conditions and privatisation. The postal workers' struggle must be strengthened by unity in action with other sections of workers. Teachers and civil servants have been balloted for strike action and health workers are facing constant cuts and job losses due to privatisation. They will all be ready allies of the posties if they have the argument out over why solidarity action is necessary.

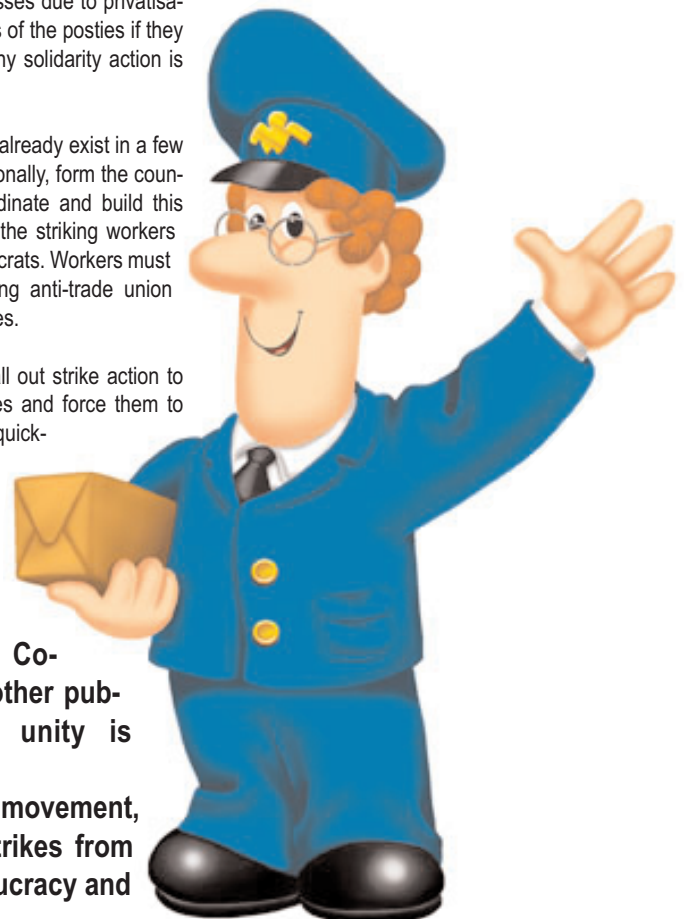
These local committees, which already exist in a few areas, can, if they are built nationally, form the councils of action needed to co-ordinate and build this action and ensure it is run by the striking workers themselves, and not the bureaucrats. Workers must be willing to break the crippling anti-trade union laws and call for solidarity strikes.

Finally workers must fight for all out strike action to pile the pressure on the bosses and force them to give in. This is the surest and quickest way to win.

- **All-out to win! Build for all-out action, all-out until it is settled!**
- **Unite the strikes! Co-ordinate action with other public sector workers, unity is strength!**
- **Build a rank and file movement, take control of the strikes from the trade union bureaucracy and**

run the strikes

- **Build councils of action to co-ordinate the strikes and bring other workers into struggle**
- **Close the postal market and renationalise the whole postal service.**
- **Fight privatisation! Build an anti-privatisation movement across the public sector**



Burma masses confront tyrants



★ BY ALASDAIR AND LUKE ★ LEEDS AND LONDON ★

A series of protests involving tens of thousands of people have been brutally repressed by the military junta, which has ruled the country since 1962. According to sources inside the country, some two hundred people were killed as military thugs opened fire on unarmed demonstrators demanding democratic change. Among those dead is a Japanese photographer who witnesses say was shot at point blank range as he raised his camera to take a photo.

alliance included monks and ordinary people, as well as members of the main opposition party the National League for Democracy (NLD). The Alliance has issued a call for people to "struggle peacefully against the evil military dictatorship" until its downfall - a demand that has been summarised as the call for a "Saffron Revolution."

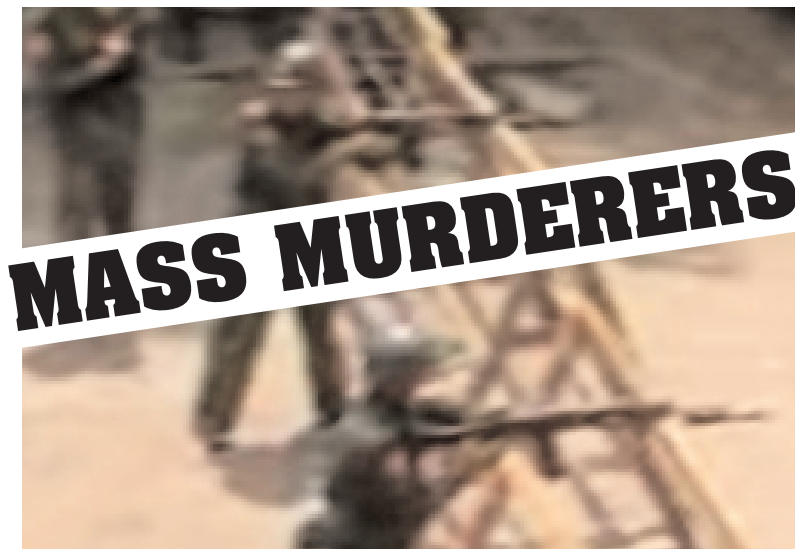
The rapid pace at which the movement has grown seems to have thrown the junta into confusion. The last time they faced opposition as radical as this was

in 1988 when there was a countrywide uprising after the killing of a student activist. That movement ended when the military dictatorship ordered the army "not to shoot upwards" resulting in the deaths of many thousands of protesters. This time round the state seems slightly more hesitant, perhaps because of the grumblings of the international

community. The Assembly of South East Asian Nations has issued a statement declaring its "revulsion" with the junta's behaviour and world leaders like Gordon Brown have criticised the Burmese regime. Brown has nothing but praise, however, for the leader of the NLD Aung San Suu Kyi. In his book *Courage* Brown praises Suu Kyi's willingness to sacrifice so much of her own life to struggle for human rights and civil liberties for all. Given the crimes his government has committed in the Middle East, this appeal to "human rights" is as hypocritical as those crimes are shameful. The NLD does not simply have support from the west though, but also are the only mass opposition force in Burma. In the elections of 1990 they won some 80% of the vote (the only time elec-

tions have taken place in Burmese post-colonial history). In contrast the pro-military party won just 2% - a striking example of its lack of popular support. The military, however, refused to recognise these elections. The NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for several years and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Despite years of opposition, high profile international backing, underground activists and overwhelming support in Burma the NLD has never pushed the confrontation with the military to a revolutionary conclusion. Like the monks the NLD have maintained at all times the need for peaceful resistance. But to "struggle peacefully" for the downfall of dictatorship is to lose. The NLD hands are tied by what are, despite their brave opposition, ultimately liberal capitalist politics. They hope to establish a state in Burma similar to the liberal democracies of the west. The problem they face is that even these states depend on the support of the military to provide the conditions for a stable capitalist order. That is why they have always looked to force democratic concessions from the military, rather than break up the military state apparatus in a revolution.

In Pakistan the same mistake is made (for the same political reasons) by the Pakistan People's Party. They have pursued a deal with Pakistan's incumbent military dictatorship throughout all the mobilisations their over the last year. Its also important to note the dramatic contrast between the way the democracy movement in Burma is covered in the western media today, with the movement in Pakistan. Whereas the Burmese military are isolated on the world stage Musharraf is a key US ally in the war on terror. Thus, in the media coverage his attacks on the movement are presented as ensuring 'stability' in a difficult situation. In contrast the attacks on the movement in Burma are presented for what they are - a massacre of pro-democracy activists. The Evening Standard, for example, were silent on the Pakistan events, but carried the screaming headline "Bloodbath" after the massacre this week in Burma.



The protests began after the government doubled the price of fuel last month and swiftly grew after the junta's brutal response to the peaceful demonstrations. Burma (or Myanmar as it is called by the Burmese) is a devoutly Buddhist country and the saffron robed monks have initiated and led the protests. At the first protest of the monks the military made their intentions clear, firing warning shots above the protesters and carrying out arrests and beatings.

Initially the monks marched by themselves and asked ordinary people not join their demonstrations but a new organisation calling itself the 'All Burma Monks Alliance' has organised demonstrations, including a one hundred-thousand strong march through the city of Yangon on Monday the 23rd September. This

Despite the crackdown by the military, the situation could still intensify. There are reports of an army

mutiny in Rangoon with soldiers refusing to fire on protestors and even defending the demonstration. Equally, the military may move decisively with overwhelming force to crush the movement - as they have done before.

What we can be sure of is that the people of Burma cry out for democratic elections and an end to military dictatorship. But the military junta will never allow or recognise the results of free elections. There is also the huge question of what kind of state and system should replace the tyrannical military dictatorship. As John Pilger highlights in his book *Hidden Agenda* have also carried out attacks on the living conditions of the working class and poor, in order to court international investment from corporations and financial institutions.

The NLD have a tremendous level of support amongst the masses, but they will not liberate the Burmese people from the shackles of the world capitalist system. Part of the reason that rich nations give them such unequivocal support is that the NLD have a vision of a democratic Burma open to the exploitation of corporations and institutions of world capitalism. This belief also leads the NLD to see Britain, the United States, et al, as the main instrument of democratic change within Burma. They hope that if these countries use their (imperial) power to bring pressure on the military to reform, then Burma will win democracy. For instance, on a recent Al-Jazeera broadcast disillusioned rank and file soldiers in the Burmese army were interviewed and claimed many of their fellow soldiers did not want to serve the military junta. However, an NLD activist was dismissive of this, arguing that no change could come from within

Burma and only the powerful nations could bring sufficient pressure on the military to give up their power.

A saffron revolution that brings some form of democratic change - inevitably involving a deal with at least some sections of the army - would leave the control of the economy in the hands of the capitalists and, importantly, those countries such as France and China who have major investments in Burma. That's why the struggle for democracy must go hand in hand with the struggle for socialist revolution. We should argue for councils to be set up with delegates from workplaces and villages, which can organise the protests and militant actions needed to smash the military - including a general strike. These councils should go to the rank and file soldiers too, fight for them to organise democratic councils of their own and defy any attacks to attack the people.

What is permanent revolution



★ BY LUKE ★ LONDON

On the few times that Trotskyists gets a mention in the capitalist media they will often find themselves described scornfully as proponents of "permanent revolution" and no effort is made to describe what the term means or its background. The implication of these throw away comments is that Trotskyists want a ceaseless, permanent upheaval and destruction in society, that they hate stability and peace and are, basically, a dangerous and destructive political element. Strangely enough this is not what the Russian revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, meant by the term when he developed it in the early 20th century.

Trotsky's starting point was the crisis-ridden character of capitalist society and the contradictory way it spread and developed. Russia at the beginning of the last century was a very backward country. An absolutist monarch, the Tsar, ruled it and its economy was mainly based on feudal agriculture. However, as capitalism penetrated Russia large industries developed and rapid urbanisation developed. Like the peasants, neither of the new classes that developed with capitalism, the workers and the capitalists, had access to political power, which was concentrated in the hands of the Tsar and the feudal nobility. The Russian capitalists were particularly weak as they feared both the Russian Tsar and the militant working class. All revolutionary socialists in Russia agreed that a revolution would at some point overthrow the Tsar but what kind of revolution would it be? Some argued that it was right and proper for the revolution to be a liberal capitalist one, which founded a liberal democracy like those in western Europe and opened the path to a longer term development of capitalism. Leon Trotsky had an altogether different view. He argued that the revolution could move quickly from a democratic revolution to a socialist revolution (be "made permanent").

The working class could play a leading role in the struggle to overthrow the Tsar by shutting down the industries and taking hold of

outside Russia's borders. For these reasons Trotsky opposed popular frontist alliances between the working class and the capitalists who exploited them.

It is now approaching the ninetieth anniversary of the October Revolution in 1917 when the Russian working class led a socialist revolution founded the world's first working class government. That revolution was eventually to succumb to a counter-revolution "from within" as it was taken over by the ruthless tyrant Stalin and his supporters in the bureaucracy. Capitalism, however, remains an exploitative and corrupt system, where everything is subordinated to the needs of a minority to profit at the expense of others. If we want to break the chains of the profit system today we have to learn the lessons of 1917, one of which is the importance of the theory of permanent revolution.

In the last few weeks a great struggle has been waged by the Burmese masses demanding democratic change. Burma is a very poor country whose economy is exploited by big corporations, like the French company Total, who have a friendly relationship to the tyrannical military junta. Like in Russia ninety years ago the working class can play a leading role in the struggle for democratic change by taking strike action to paralyse the economy and, as a result, can give leadership to the rural and urban poor. The question the democracy protests pose is what kind of state and government should replace the military tyrants? What kind of democracy do we need? The last thing Burma needs is a democratic form of capitalism where its economy remains exploited by big capitalist powers, in a close alliance with the Burmese capitalists. That is why the strategy of permanent revolution - the linking of the struggle for democracy with the struggle for socialist revolution and the formation of a revolutionary workers government - remains, some ninety years after the Russian revolution, absolutely essential.

the cities. They could win the peasants to their side by linking the struggle for democracy with the struggle for an agrarian revolution that gave land to the peasants. In response to the question what kind of state should replace the Tsarist autocracy Trotsky was unequivocal. He argued a revolutionary workers state should be formed that fought for a world revolution against the capitalist system, particularly by seeking to spread the revolution

B O L I V I A

★ BY TIM ★ ESSEX ★

The Bolivian elite has demonstrated the depths to which ruling classes will sink in order to keep their grip on resources and power. After years of claiming to be Bolivian patriots, they now want to split the country in two. Bolivia's left-wing government has its base in the city of La Paz and its working class suburbs and amongst the poor peasants. La Paz is Bolivia's largest city and has been the seat of government since 1898, but the right now demands the government move to the small city of Sucre.

They hope to weaken Bolivia's most militant working class region, where people are mostly of indigenous origin and were traditionally excluded from formal politics. However, in 2006 Evo Morales of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) became Bolivia's first indigenous President. Since the turn of the century Bolivia has seen major class struggles, as workers and youth have fought to stop the plunder of Bolivia's natural resources at the hands of domestic and multinational capital. The election of Morales followed these protests and many workers thought he would bring about radical change.

The right responded to his election not by making concessions but through a campaign of sabotage and violence. Morales has tried to negotiate between both sides – the radical poor masses who are demanding change and the capitalists who will do everything in their power to resist it. For example, Morales has called a constituent assembly to decide Bolivia's future, but has conceded to the demands of the right that its decisions need a two thirds a majority – giving the bosses a block on reforms, even though they are a minority. The events in Cochabamba are a powerful example of the intense conflict in Bolivia. This is where workers resistance to the neo-liberal looting of Bolivia exploded into mass demonstrations against privatisation of the water supply. Here, current Mayor Manfred Reyes Villa employs semi-fascist youth groups, made up of mainly wealthy students, to intimidate left-wing activists.

It's even worse in resource rich lowland provinces such as Santa Cruz, where the population traditionally considers itself more "white" than the indigenous highlands. The elite have stoked up regionalist hatred of the government based on racist stereotypes. Here too, the violent youths and the provincial security forces are used



to attack the left and the provinces poorest, most indigenous looking inhabitants. Provincial governor Ruben Costas leads the regional autonomy movement of Bolivia's richest provinces. This is a strategy by the elite designed to resist wealth re-distribution to the poor regions.

The region of Santa Cruz has demanded absolute control of land, resources, the justice system, the police, which, taken together, is effectively a demand for complete independence. Apparently, if the bourgeoisie dislikes the results of an election strongly enough, it will simply try to break away from the country! Its important to remember that before 2006 there was no serious autonomy movement in these provinces and "regional nationalism" was unheard of in Bolivia.

Bolivia's working class has shown it will not sit back and watch its country get torn apart by a sinister clique of landowners, politicians and oil and gas barons. They've come too far for that. Over a million people attended "national unity" demonstrations in support of the government against the separatists. But this alone isn't enough. The "national unity" strategy, which seeks to unite the radical workers with the bosses, is failing. Morales thought that by weakening Bolivia's Constituent Assembly he could appease the right. But when Bolivian workers in Cochabamba set up a directly democratic commune to run their own affairs independent of the semi-fascist governor who was terrorising them, Morales refused to recognise it. Again he hoped this stance would appease the right, but, predictably, it has made them more aggressive. Morales also assured private oil and gas extractors that if they act "legal-

ly and in good faith", they won't see "their" assets nationalised – yet he was elected on the back of a demand for public control of these key resources.

The very ownership of Bolivia's resources by capitalist parasites is what gives them the power to blackmail anyone who asks for a fairer society. As long as the bosses have control of the Bolivian economy, i.e. for so long as the workers don't expropriate the capitalists and take power into their own hands, any reforms that are won will always be unstable. This is because once the bosses have recovered they will go on the offensive against these reforms, like their attacks on Bolivian social security in the 1990s. As any Bolivian worker will tell you, capitalists certainly didn't act "legally" or "in good faith" back then, or at any other time in Bolivia's history.

As Bolivia's vicious exploiting class has made clear the only flag the capitalists' salute is profit. Once the Bolivian flag was no longer synonymous with US dollars, these pseudo-patriots had no use for it. The reactions of the national elite and the conciliatory weasel words of international capitalism to MAS's reforms don't show the capitalists strength, but betray the fear that comes from knowing they are defending the indefensible and confronting the majority. The time for patriotism and "unity" has passed, and Bolivian workers must struggle for power. They must arm themselves to stop the inevitable repression. A revolutionary party must be formed to fight for these policies, breaking from the MAS reformists and leading the workers and poor to 21st century socialism.

Feminism first developed as a movement in the early 19th century, and became influential again in the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite political rights gained for some women by these movements, women today still suffer oppression, violence and the double burden of work and childcare.

The early feminist movement was focussed around the campaign for equal voting rights. The most progressive figures within the suffragette movement, such as Sylvia Pankhurst, believed that votes for women would be achieved by a mass mobilisation of workers, both male and female. However a significant force within the movement – the more bourgeois feminists – argued they should limit the struggle to the demand for women who owned property to be granted voting rights. As you can imagine, this was not exactly a demand that would change the lives of the majority of women!

important shared interest was class, and therefore that the struggle for women's liberation had to be seen in the context of the struggle to destroy class society itself. These views were influenced by classical Marxism, particularly the writings of Frederick Engels, who explained how the beginnings of private property made monogamous relationships necessary, so that the eldest male heirs could 'safely' inherit their father's property. This created the need for the patriarchal family, which is still the root cause of women's oppression today. So for Marxists,



Radical feminists saw women as a separate exploited and oppressed caste or class, who needed to organise against their class enemy, men. Thus militarism, particularly the development of nuclear weapons, was viewed as a manifestation of male power – instead of the tool of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Radical feminists joined reactionary "moral majority" groups campaigning for bans on pornography and sex work – instead of arguing for the women who work in these incredibly exploitative industries to be unionised and treated with respect. Some radical feminists also campaigned for women to be given wages for housework, thus reinforcing the capitalist ideology that women belong to the domestic sphere and have different roles and qualities from men.

In response to these *very* misguided views, a distinct current of "socialist feminism" emerged within the women's liberation movement, arguing for greater class-consciousness and orientation to the labour movement. But socialist feminism still failed to develop a Marxist understanding of women's oppression as a product of

What's wrong with feminism?

Working class women would not benefit from this, but they were encouraged to support the campaign as their greater numbers were used as a prop to help privileged women gain rights for themselves. Some bourgeois feminist organisations (such as the Russian League for Women's Equality) even promoted harmony between female employers and female employees on the basis that they were all women. So women working 12-hour days for starvation wages should not try to improve their situation if this meant confronting another woman!

Essentially, bourgeois women were fighting for the rights to own property and to exploit workers, both male and female. This is a right they have gained today and any woman who works for a female boss can quickly tell you this is no better than a male! The working class women's organisations which sprung up across the world recognised that working class and bourgeois women do not have common interests. For example, the American Elisabeth Gurley Flynn, a leading organiser of Industrial Workers of the World, argued at the first international women's conference in 1907: "The queen in the parlour has no interest in common with the maid in the kitchen; the wife of the department store owner shows no sisterly concern for the 17 year old girl who finds prostitution the only door open...The sisterhood of women, like the brotherhood of man, is a hollow sham to labour."

These organisations correctly realised that the



women's oppression is not a natural state of society that has always existed, but is historically specific to class societies where private property is owned.

This is one of the key points that separates revolutionary socialists from feminists, because they tend to view women's oppression as something that has always existed and that stems not from a particular organisation of society, but rather from the inherently oppressive nature of men. This is particularly true of "radical feminism" which was an important force in the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960's and 1970's and believed in patriarchy as an underlying oppression that was more fundamental than class relations.

*** BY NAT * LONDON ***

class society. Instead they identified dynamics of women's oppression which were separate from fundamental class conflicts, and shared with radical feminists the idea of an underlying "patriarchy" distinct from the domination of the capitalists and their state. Some saw male workers as a temporary ally in some struggles, but ultimately as a force that women would have to organise against.

Marxists, however, see working class men as a natural ally in the sense that they share a common objective in the destruction of capitalism. Although male workers obtain certain short-term benefits from women's oppression (e.g. marginally higher wages than women and the fact that housework is performed for them free of charge within the family) in the long term, this only serves to divide the working class and therefore benefits no-one but the capitalists. Therefore, the trade unions, the left and the anti-capitalist movement should put calls for women's liberation at the forefront of their demands, while also encouraging working class women to be organised within these movements. While feminists believe it is possible to struggle for women's rights separately from the fight against all the other inequalities, exploitation and oppression that exist in society, for us there can be no women's liberation without socialism, and no socialism without women's liberation!

Youth oppression in Britain - fight back!

★ BY JANE F ★ LEEDS ★

Over many years, governments across the world have carried out attacks in many different forms on young people. Just recently, here in England the legal minimum age for buying tobacco is set to rise from 16 to 18. There is no question to the fact that smoking is dangerous to health. However, by introducing new laws such as these, it is effectively saying that it is fine for 18 year olds to smoke and cause danger to their health but not for younger people to do so. So people under 18 shouldn't be allowed to control their own bodies, and decide for themselves what is good for them and what isn't? This assumption that youth do not have the knowledge or capability to be able to be in charge of themselves is the real problem that needs to be tackled. In addition to this imminent law, there have also been discussions around whether the drinking age should be increased to 21, a call raised by Public Policy research.

These issues, however, are relatively minor compared to other discrimination taking place against youth across Europe. The age of consent is one example of draconian legislation oppressing youth. In England it is 16, and the UK also has the second highest rate of teenage pregnancies, second only to the US. Whereas in Holland the age of consent is lower (14), yet they have one of the lowest rates of teenage pregnancies and STD's. Quite clearly, however, the fact of the matter is that the level of sex education in England is disgustingly low, and Britain's double message of sex that is portrayed to young people is an extremely confusing one. We are bombarded with images of sex through the media, but then youth are criminalised for engaging in underage sex. In schools, sex education is lacking of true and necessary information (especially about contraception), whilst in many

schools, such as religious schools, it is hardly taught at all. As mentioned before, this stigmatisation of young people's sexuality is another example of how society and more specifically the government believe that young people do not have the right to take control of their own bodies.

Another form of discrimination that is taking place against youth is the significant difference in minimum wages for young people. In England, if you are below school leaving age, your employers can pay you whatever they feel- that is of course if you manage to get a job in the first

Lastly, a very recent example of youth oppression and the pure hypocrisy of the government is how recent incidents such as shootings between rival gangs and violence on the streets is being blamed on rap music and violent video games. These apparently glorify violence and gun use. This is astonishingly hypocritical- you cannot even switch on the television without seeing adverts glorifying the army and encouraging young people to choose being pawns in world leader's war games as their future! It is insane for the government to accuse music and games of

promoting violence in young people when they actively try and recruit to the army through schools. The government is using rap music and video games as a smoke screen to disguise the real causes of gun crime: the inequality and poverty caused in Britain as a result of the neo Liberal policies of Thatcher, Blair and Brown.



Young, working class and bored - does that make them criminals?

place. For sixteen and seventeen year olds, this becomes a meager £3.30 an hour, for over 18's it is £4.45 and for workers over 21 it is £5.35 an hour. To try and leave home when you finish school is an ambition that is being pushed further and further away from young people by the massive oppression placed upon them by the government. The different minimum wages for young people show just how accepted youth oppression is within society- there is legislation in place to ensure women and black people are paid equally, even if it isn't always enforced, yet there is legislation to make sure that young people are paid less. An example of this is the CPE law that was proposed in France last year that would suspend protection against unlawful dismissal and make it easy for bosses to sack young employees.

Youth are the most radical generation. We fight back against injustice and attacks because we have not been stained by the defeats and disillusionments of the previous years. This is responded to by attacks from the government on our rights to participate in political activity- the restriction on the voting age and the biased education we receive.

It is time for youth to fight back, to fight for decent pay and conditions to organise to build a revolutionary youth movement that will smash the chains of capitalism!

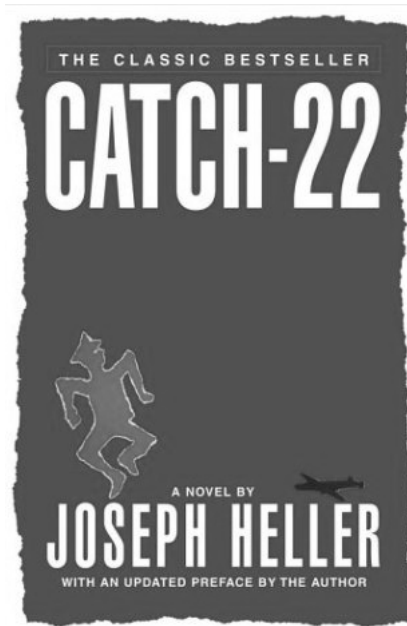
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Catch 22

★ BY REBECCA ★ LEEDS ★

Catch-22 is famous for being one of the first, and certainly the most famous, American novels in the post-WW2 satirical tradition. It's been praised for its humour, its use of chronology, repetition and paradox, but something that doesn't seem to be discussed much in literary circles are the politics of Joseph Heller's famous novel.

Catch-22 is an anti-war masterpiece, reacting against the political repression of the McCarthyist era and the patriotism of wartime America. It is set during WW2 in an American airbase just off the coast of Italy and follows intertwining stories of a number of the officers, commanding officers, the chaplain and the doctor. Through the novel, Heller lays bare the problems of imperialist war, from the bureaucracy of the army to the absurdity of nationalism and the hypocrisy of capitalism. Heller wasn't a Marxist, but he draws out these themes to the point of such acute clarity it's hard to believe that he didn't see a unifying solution to them other than mutiny and desertion. For example, a number of chapters in the latter part of the book are dedicated to the



mess hall officer, Milo Minderbinder, and the huge corporation he creates through profiting from the ongoing war - including military contracts with both sides. Heller's exposure of the conflict of interest between Milo and the soldiers on both sides, between the capitalist and working class, shows that Heller understood who benefited from the mass slaughter of the Second World War.

Yossarian, the protagonist, comes to the conclusion that he's more afraid of his commanding officers than he is of the German troops who are trying to shoot him down, as it is his own country that is forcing him to fight the Germans.

The title of the novel refers to a military rule that reoccurs in the novel, first as an explanation of why Yossarian must continue to fly missions in the army, and later as a justification of a reign of terror in Rome by Italian Military Police, 'Catch-22 says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing'. Catch-22 is the rule of bureaucracy in the army; it's the use of circular logic to justify a total lack of democracy and is used to demonstrate the powerlessness of the average soldier or even lower-ranking officer counterposed to the bureaucratic power of the generals and their staff.

Catch-22 is hilariously funny and its use of realism to expose the horror of war makes the reader empathise more with the characters than perhaps they would if Yossarian was politicised or had any sort of social conscience rather than simply being a selfish, sexist nutcase who just wants to stay alive.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSION

A report from a charity this month showed just how easy it is for rich people to get into the best universities. The Sutton Trust said that students from 100 elite colleges (out of the 3,700 in Britain) accounted for a sixth of admissions to Britain's top 13 universities. Most of these colleges are either private or selective, and even those who attend the top 30 comprehensives are half as likely to get into these universities when they have the same A-levels as their privileged counterparts.



The Sutton Trust has been arguing for years that the expansion in Britain's universities has dispro-

portionately benefited young people from upper or middle class background. In 2005 a report showed that 20% people from the richest 20% of families used to go to university and that has risen to 43% since the 1980s, for the poorest 20 % of families it has gone down from 9% to 6%. Top-up fees are now making the situation even worse for young people from working class families.

This disparity is partly because working class parents don't have as much free time and so help their children with their education and the disadvantage working class parents faced when they, themselves were in education also impacts on this. For example by the age of 5, a child with a working class family will have heard 13 million words and a child from a middle class family will have heard 45 million words. This advantage for the upper

and middle classes continues all the way through education, with those from richer families also benefiting from private tutoring and from going to the best schools.

Universities like Oxford and Cambridge blatantly discriminate against students from comprehensives, 30 colleges account for a quarter of admissions and (surprise, surprise) 28 of these colleges are private, one is selective and the other is a comprehensive.

To fight back against education disproportionately benefiting the rich we need to scrap tuition fees, private and selective schools. We also need to demand more funding for education, funding that can be raised through taxing the rich. But the government is always going to try and spend more on things like war or trident missiles than on education or healthcare. We need to get rid of class and privilege altogether and achieve real equality through socialism.

who will pay for economic crisis?

★ BY JO ★ LONDON ★

Gordon Brown was often praised for his management of the economy during his time as Chancellor. This image of the Prime Minister as the architect of a stable economy has been severely tarnished by the recent crisis of Northern Rock. It is now becoming clear that British economic growth has been built on the unstable foundations of debt (each adult in Britain is in an estimated £28,000 of debt) and as the ripples from the US credit crunch spread over the international markets to the UK, Brown's ambition of a stable economy is beginning to become unstuck.

The crisis in Northern Rock came off the back of the collapse of sub prime mortgages (mortgages lent to poor people who can't afford to pay them back) in the US which destabilised international financial markets and led to Northern Rock having difficulties financing its lending. The recent market turmoil has meant that other banks have been increasingly reluctant to lend and hence Northern Rock feared it could run out of cash. As this news hit the headlines, customers of the bank queued up, often over night to get their savings (withdrawing a total of £2 billion) out despite pleas from Northern Rock not to withdraw savings as they would not be lost. Luckily for the chief executives of Northern Rock, the new Chancellor Alistair Darling bailed out the bank, agreeing to honour all savings

held in the accounts at the bank. The hypocrisy of this blank cheque to Northern Rock from the government is impossible to neglect. This is the same government which fails to spend money council housing for fear of disrupting the market yet it is willing to bale out banks and big business with enormous handouts.

It is hard to predict when the credit crunch will spark a recession in the US or Britain. What we can be sure of is that any economic problems Britain suffers will be paid for heavily by the working class and not by the bosses. Brown has already cut real pay in the public sector under the guise of controlling inflation - although he continues to allow workers in the City to earn massive bonuses.. The "credit crunch" is a symptom of the madness of the market system. Under capitalism, crisis and exploitation are inevitable and unavoidable. We need a democratically planned economy that responds to people's needs not profit. We need socialism.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Independent on Sunday got it right in an "expose" of REVOLUTIONs involvement in organising May Day 2001. It said: "REVOLUTION wants to build a revolutionary socialist mass movement and overthrow capitalism." Exactly right. We are opposed to capitalism and the misery, alienation, war and environmental destruction it creates.

We fight all forms of discrimination and oppression, whether on grounds of sex, race, nationality or sexuality.


Capitalism is a global system, so we have to fight it globally. We want to smash the borders and divisions of nations and move forward to a truly global and united humanity, without bigotry, war and class division. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our sisters and brothers in the Third World struggling to break free of the trillion dollar debt, the IMF, WTO and NATO.

We are socialists - we want to abolish capitalism and replace it with a planned economy. But we do not believe that the capitalist elite will allow their wealth and privilege to be voted out of existence. We believe it will take force to take the power and property away from the few and redistribute into the hands of the many - that means a revolution!

REVO wants young people to participate in radical politics and organise themselves. Young people can be very radical and militant, the anti war movement proved that. They should take a lead in the movement that will shape the struggle for the future.

We believe a mass movement must be built based on the support of the majority of the people - the working class. It is the working class that produces all the wealth in this society. The working class has no interest in keeping capitalism going. Only the working class has the power, the size and the traditions of organisation to bring this rotten system crashing down.

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